

House Resolution 1040

By: Representatives Brooks of the 63rd, Jones of the 44th, Watson of the 91st, Smyre of the 132nd, Holmes of the 61st, and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Honoring Mrs. Rosa Parks, Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, Sr., Reverend Hosea Williams, and
2 Dr. Joseph Lowery, recognizing their accomplishments as worthy of enduring memorials,
3 and authorizing the placement of their portraits in the State Capitol; and for other purposes.

Part I

5 WHEREAS, on December 1, 1955, seamstress Rosa Parks became a beacon of courage and
6 a symbol of civil rights when she refused to give up her seat on a city bus to a white
7 passenger, accepting arrest, trial, and conviction instead of humiliation; and

8 WHEREAS, her quiet insistence on human dignity in the face of segregation, racism, and Jim
9 Crow laws sparked the city-wide bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, that brought an
10 unknown young minister, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to national prominence; and

11 WHEREAS, alongside Dr. King, Rosa Parks became a leader and icon in the national effort
12 that resulted in the United States Supreme Court decision outlawing the segregation of city
13 buses, and gave critical momentum to the larger battle for civil rights; and

14 WHEREAS, Rosa Parks has been hailed as the "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement" in
15 America for her pivotal act on that day in Alabama, as well as for her lifelong commitment
16 to justice for black Americans; and

17 WHEREAS, Rosa Parks received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Nonviolent Peace Prize, the
18 Presidential Medal of Freedom, and a Congressional Gold Medal, and following her death
19 at age 92, become the first woman to lie in state in the United States Capitol Rotunda.

Part II

WHEREAS, Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, Sr., was born in Linden, Alabama, on March 11, 1926; and

WHEREAS, his involvement in political activism began while he was a student at Alabama State University, when he led demonstrations protesting the lack of heat and hot water in his dormitory; and

WHEREAS, in 1951, he earned an M.A. degree in sociology from Atlanta University and then became pastor of the First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, while living in Montgomery, he formed a close and enduring partnership with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, in 1955, when Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus, Dr. Abernathy and Dr. King organized the bus boycott in Montgomery that ended when the United States Supreme Court affirmed the ruling that segregation on buses was unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Abernathy was the secretary-treasurer of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and assumed the presidency of the SCLC after Dr. King's death; and

WHEREAS, in May, 1968, he organized the Poor People's Campaign March on Washington, D.C., hoping to bring attention to the plight of the nation's impoverished and for which he was jailed for nearly three weeks; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Abernathy, a giant in the civil rights struggle whose legacy endures, died April 17, 1990.

Part III

WHEREAS, the Reverend Hosea L. Williams was an activist fueled by compassionate understanding and raw courage whose activism over the course of a career that spanned four decades was always in service to God, his family, his people, the nation, and all of humanity; and

1 WHEREAS, it was in leading the historic march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge on
2 "Bloody Sunday" in 1965 that Hosea Williams's raw courage was most evident, and that
3 pivotal event was instrumental in securing passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act; and

4 WHEREAS, Reverend Williams served with distinction as a member of the Georgia House
5 of Representatives from 1974 to 1983, representing District 54; and

6 WHEREAS, as chief executive of "Hosea's Feed the Hungry and Homeless in Metro
7 Atlanta," founded in 1970, Reverend Williams assumed responsibility for feeding thousands
8 of Atlanta's homeless during the holidays each year; and

9 WHEREAS, Hosea Williams served the citizens of the State of Georgia with great
10 effectiveness and unparalleled dedication and it is only fitting and proper that he be duly
11 recognized and honored for decades of service in devotion to timeless principles.

12 Part IV

13 WHEREAS, Reverend Dr. Joseph E. Lowery is one of the State of Georgia's most
14 distinguished citizens, a nationally recognized preacher, and a renowned civil rights leader;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, when *Ebony* magazine named him one of the nation's 15 greatest black
17 preachers, he was described as "the consummate voice of biblical social relevancy, a focused
18 voice, speaking truth to power"; and

19 WHEREAS, when the NAACP honored him at its 1997 convention, he was called the "dean
20 of the civil rights movement"; and

21 WHEREAS, as head of the Civic Affairs Association in Mobile, Alabama, he led the
22 movement for the desegregation of buses and public accommodations; and

23 WHEREAS, in 1957, he cofounded with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Southern Christian
24 Leadership Conference (SCLC) and served as its president and chief executive officer from
25 1977 to 1998; and

1 WHEREAS, Dr. Lowery led protests in Warren, North Carolina, against the dumping of
2 toxic waste in poor communities, which led to the environmental justice movement; and

3 WHEREAS, he served as pastor of Atlanta's oldest predominantly black Central United
4 Methodist Church for 18 years, and, from 1986 to 1992, he was the esteemed leader of the
5 Cascade United Methodist Church; and

6 WHEREAS, as convener of the Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda, he is a strong
7 force for election reform, criminal justice system reform, and government reform.

8 Part V

9 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY that this body
10 honors Mrs. Rosa Parks, Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, Sr., Reverend Hosea Williams, and Dr.
11 Joseph Lowery for their gallant service to this state and this nation as leaders of the Civil
12 Rights Movement and in recognition of that service directs that a portrait of each of them be
13 placed on the second floor of the State Capitol building alongside the portrait of Dr. Martin
14 Luther King, Jr.